

## It's over to you, Tony Crosland

After all, the April 1–2 European Council in Luxembourg failed to agree on a draft convention for direct elections to the European Parliament. Instead, the matter was put off until the next summit in July. It is now up to the Council of Foreign Ministers — including Britain's new Foreign Secretary Anthony Crosland — to sort out, in time, the remaining major problems.

The European Parliament, gathering in Luxembourg on Monday, April 5, was not surprisingly disappointed — even angry — at the previous week's events. When Luxembourg

came home," he concluded, "but what we need now is a decision". As the Council of Foreign Ministers held their first post-summit meeting on Tuesday, April 6, they were joined by Parliament President Spénale and the political group leaders. All but European Progressive Democrat leader, French Gaullist Christian de la Malène, pressed this view.

Despite the summit, however, the situation on direct elections is not yet hopeless. In particular:

1. The British Government's view, as expressed by Mr Callaghan in the House of Commons (see p. 2) and at the summit seems to correspond with that outlined by Sir Peter Kirk. So do the views of most other governments, as Gaston Thorn told Parliament on Wednesday.
2. The postponement of a decision until July will give the House of Commons select Committee on direct elections, which is now being set up, a chance to discuss the issues, and make later implementation easier.
3. The summit did, after all, make some decisions: the actual timetable for polling within a single week (all results to be declared on the final Sunday), the name of the institution ("Assembly" in law, "Parliament" in popular speech).

Otherwise, as Michael Stewart reminded Parliament, "if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound who can prepare for battle?"



European Parliament leaders meet before . . . . .

Prime Minister Gaston Thorn reported to Parliament on the Wednesday, Michael Stewart (Soc/UK) echoed the opinion of most Members in wondering what purpose European Councils now served. They were supposed to tie up loose ends. But "apart from a few details that any group of civil servants could have settled . . . the one major loose end — the allocation of seats — is now a bit looser than it was before".

Indeed, the only dramatic event of the summit — President Giscard D'Estaing's last minute proposal that the number and allocation of seats should stay as it is at present (198; UK 36) — was received with horror. Sir Peter Kirk (Con/UK) pointed out that the Parliament had made it clear what it wanted: between 300 and 400 seats, no country receiving fewer than at present, and the greatest possible degree of proportionality thereafter, "We could argue about formulae until the cows



. . . . . putting their case to the Council of Ministers.

## We'll spend it - Cheysson

The Commission is going ahead with spending on aid to developing countries, voted by Parliament in the 1976 Budget, and despite the Council of Ministers failure to agree on Thursday, April 8. "The Commission has decided to make this money available from Monday," Commissioner Cheysson told and enthusiastic Parliament on Friday, April 9. "If our action is considered illegal we're quite happy to be brought before the Court of Justice."

It was on Thursday evening (April 8) that the Council of Overseas Development Ministers in Luxembourg failed to endorse Community participation in four key areas of overseas aid: medium-term food aid, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, (IFAD), financial and technical aid to non-associate developing countries and joint financing of aid projects with non governmental organisations (NGOs). France was reported to be blocking the provision of aid to the non-associated developing countries and participation in IFAD;

Italy to be holding up the medium-term food aid decisions and Germany the NGO joint financing scheme.

Commissioner Cheysson who attended the Council meeting warned the Ministers that where an item of aid spending was already inscribed in the 1976 Community budget there was a legal obligation to spend that money. This was the case regarding 20 million units of account (about £10 million) for the non-associate aid and 2.5 million u.a. (about £1.25 million) for the NGO scheme.

By the next morning Members of Parliament knew of the Council's failure. Condemnation came from all sides of the House. James Scott-Hopkins (Con/UK) suggested that where one member state was blocking action the other eight should simply go ahead. And Colette Flesch (Lib/Lux) for the Development Committee, Erwin Lange (Soc/Ger), chairman of the Budgets Committee, Lord Walston (Soc/UK) and Pierre Deschamps (CD/Bel) all agreed a stand had to be made. So it was with loud applause that Commissioner Cheysson announced that on the NGO scheme at least, he would see that the money was spent.

## Power gained, power lost?

When the Houses of Commons and Lords debated direct elections on March 29 and 30, two days before the Luxembourg summit, the division of opinion was much as could be expected. In the Commons the old *antis* were still *anti* (some of them preferring to talk about powdered milk than the actual subject for debate), the *pros* still *pro*. It was a poorly attended debate for what *pros* and *antis* alike declared was a major constitutional issue: MEP Hugh Dykes (Con) at one point drew an unfavourable comparison with the European Parliament itself discussing mayonnaise. Possibly what steam there was had left the debate at the start when the then Foreign Secretary, James Callaghan, announced the appointment of a Select Committee on the subject.

There was no doubt, however, that the balance of opinion — as in the Lords — favoured direct elections. "There is a genuine need for the peoples of the Member States to be identified with the Community in some way," Mr Callaghan told the House. "The electors should have the opportunity to express their views on the questions concerning the Community as a whole, separately from national elections." (He also noted, however, that the proposal for 355 members, with 67 for the UK, was "simply not good enough" in underrepresenting Scotland and Wales in comparison with Denmark and Ireland.) Chairman of the European Parliament's Legal Affairs Committee, Sir Derek Walker-Smith (Con), clinically disposed of the argument — advanced by his old anti-market comrade in the Macmillan days, Neil Marten (Con) — that the Treaties implied no commitment to direct elections.

There were also some notable, favourable speeches from former *antis*. Edward du Cann (Con) declared that "if we are to have a European Parliament . . . let it be an outstanding example of democracy to the world". Mrs Winifred Ewing, an MEP, but speaking for the whole SNP, was in favour, and

advocated a system of Alternative Vote in single-member seats.

The more thoughtful opponents of direct elections — i.e. those who were not just refighting the referendum — focused attention on the future balance of power between the European and national parliaments. "Power which is gained in one place is power lost in another place," noted Enoch Powell (UUC). Guy Barnett (Lab), another MEP, made the interesting point that the major effect of directly electing the European Parliament would be to give democratic legitimacy to the proposals of the Commission — a legitimacy as good as that of the Council of Ministers. This was a prescription for "constitutional muddle". George Cunningham (Lab) was worried that the choices offered at direct elections would be false ones. "If we could put up two candidates labelled 'Fast man' and 'Slow man', there would be a real choice . . . I should put myself up as a slow man", standing for the "inevitability of gradualness".

Opponents of direct elections, however, were not really able to make up their minds whether the "Assembly" was too powerless to bother about, or whether it constituted a threat of instant federalism. Sir Peter Kirk (Con) among others was able to demonstrate clearly that direct elections were a separate issue from additional powers, and that they were necessary above all so that the European Parliament could exercise its present functions efficiently.

Nevertheless, it was clear that some of the opponents' fears were not entirely swept away. Winding up from the Conservative and Labour front benches, Douglas Hurd and Roy Hattersley were at pains to reassure the House that any growth of European Parliament power was subject to Westminster veto. Yet, looking down on the virtually empty Chamber, one wondered whether MEP Willie Hamilton (Lab) had not been right on BBC "Women's Hour" the previous day: "the future's here in the European Parliament; the museum's at Westminster".

## President's prerogative

The European Parliament decided on Thursday 8 April not to have a debate on Spain, although there was disquiet in some quarters about recent arrests there. The Communists withdrew a motion based on the understanding that the House supported the action of Parliament President Spénale, who had on March 31 had sent a telegram of protest to the Spanish Ambassador to the Communities.

Parliament support, however, was not given without some disquiet, in turn, about the procedure used. "Perhaps, Mr President", asked chairman of the Legal Affairs Committee Sir Derek Walker-Smith (Con/UK), you could explain to us . . . in what circumstances you, as President of Parliament, send communications which have not been the subject of a resolution by Parliament." It was important "when the President speaks in the name of Parliament, that Parliament should be fully apprised in advance of the action and endorse it, not retrospectively . . . but beforehand."

Several speakers on the left thought Sir Derek's motives political rather than procedural; but he assured the House he only wanted clarification. Perhaps the trouble was, commented Spénale, that in the House of Commons the Speaker didn't speak!

## Coexistence or cold war?

"Is the West in the process of digging its own political grave?" asked Tom Normanton (Con/UK) during a debate on Thursday, April 8, on East-West political and economic relations. He was one of many speakers who criticised the Community's current attitude to the Soviet Union and negotiations with Comecon. As Hugh Dykes (Con/UK) put it, speaking formally for the Centre Right "alliance", which had tabled the question for debate, "it is not only Mr Alexander Solzhenitzyn who has expressed anxieties about the meaning of Soviet policy".

Mr Dykes pointed to the dangers of unfavourable economic relations with the centralised Russian trading system, "which can concentrate on national, economic and political considerations without any concern for the real cost of production".

Continuing the onslaught, Gabriel Kaspereit (EPD/F) said that "Helsinki is probably one of the greatest farces of recent history". In future, said Mr Kaspereit, we should demand reciprocity.

With both the Socialist and Communist Groups adopting a very low-keyed stance, it fell to Council President in Office Berchem to try to allay Members' fears. The talks with Comecon would continue but Parliament would be kept informed. Both Russia and Comecon were interested in the Community, said Commissioner Brunner, and that fact itself could be exploited in the negotiations. "We are not in a hurry."

## All at sea

Major differences of view between Member States are making it very difficult for the Community to agree on a joint stance at the Law of the Sea Conference. This was revealed by President in Office of the Council Berchem during a debate on Law of the Sea policy on Thursday, April 8. British Members, in particular, during this and an earlier more limited technical debate on Monday, April 5, served notice that they were determined to see Britain's important fishing interests safeguarded. They attacked both the existing Community maritime law in the Treaty of Rome and Accession Treaty and Commission proposals for future policy.

"The laws relating to the sea in the Treaties, which could have been perfectly proper as a legal basis for the original Community" had been shown "to be inadequate to deal with a Community of Nine which includes Ireland, Scotland, England and Denmark among its littoral states," said Mark Hughes (Soc/UK).

"Inadequate" was how James Scott-Hopkins (Con/UK) described the Commission's proposal for a 12 mile limit to protect the inshore fishing industry. He wanted 50 or at least 25 miles. Why shouldn't the Commission wait until after the law of the sea conference had decided on the wider agreement before making inshore proposals? John Prescott went further: "if they can't agree to 200 miles at the Law of the Sea Conference, Europe, or nations individually or multilaterally, must declare the 200 mile limit for themselves".



## Question Time

If Parliament does decide to take the Council of Ministers to court (see EPR no.23), the *casus belli* could well be Community transport policy. German Christian Democrat Heinz Mursch hinted as much at Question Time on Wednesday when pointing out that such a common policy was actually laid down in the EEC Treaty; but the Council had persistently failed to act on Commission proposals, 69 of which still "lay on the table". Luxembourg Prime Minister Gaston Thorn, for the Council, did not satisfy Members by replying that the situation was much the same in other fields of policy, and that most of the 69 proposals, in any case, were now out of date. Some of them, John Osborn (Con/UK) insisted, were urgent; for instance, the matter of axle weights. And weren't the others out of date, added Socialist Leader Ludwig Fellermaier (Ger) precisely because the Council had done nothing? I sympathise, said Thorn; but you can hardly expect the President of the Council to agree that the Parliament take the Council to Court. "And, even if you won, you still wouldn't have a common transport policy!"

## Redundant diplomats

Why is it, asked Alex Fletcher (Con/UK), that in these Community days the nine Member States still have 72 ambassadors, and nearly 600 other senior diplomats, appointed to each others' capitals — to say nothing of the 230 similar appointments in Brussels? Weren't they duplicating work now handled by the Community's institutions? Oh no, replied Mr. Thorn, the embassies now had to employ additional economists, precisely because economic links were now stronger. This logic did not impress Lord Gladwyn (Lib/UK). Surely "the greater coordination there is in economic affairs, the less work for individual embassies?". And Ludwig Fellermaier (Soc/Ger) wanted to know, as well, why the nine Member States couldn't set up a single embassy between them in such new countries as Angola and Guinea-Bissau. But if you did that, replied Mr. Thorn, those countries would feel cheated: they wanted just as many embassies as their next door neighbours.

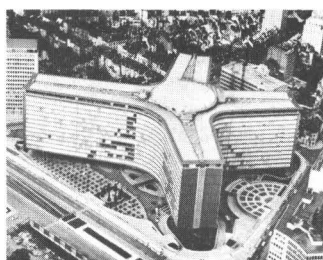
## Bribery and high places

The recent revelations in the United States about bribery by certain multi-national companies is causing upheaval and controversy in several countries; and also within the European Parliament. It was John Prescott (Soc/UK) who put the cat among the pigeons, asking Commissioner Scarascia Mugnozza about payments to the German Christian Democrats, and possible consequent contraventions of the Community's Competition laws. It was deplorable, replied the Commissioner, to accuse any one party because "all parties are probably involved in situations of this kind". There were immediate protests, and Fazio Fabbrini was quick to assert that the Italian Communists, at least, were not involved in such scandals. The House became even more lively, however, when the Commissioner again deplored, the attack "on my party". President Spénale, from the chair, intervened to tell the Commissioner that "in the position you occupy, like me, you do not have a party". But Mr. Scarascia Mugnozza refused to withdraw. "I am independent of Member States," he declared. "But there is no

question of my renouncing my political beliefs." It was Lord Gladwyn (Lib/UK) who eventually pointed out that unless the Council of Ministers rapidly agreed on a common Community policy for the aircraft industry, the European market would be taken over by the Americans, "whether they indulge in bribery or not".

## Overseas students' fees

The troubles of the British government caused by its proposed increase in fees for foreign students may not be over. The Commission was actively considering the matter, said Commissioner Brunner in reply to Lord Reay (Con/UK), who asked whether the increase was not contrary to the Treaties in so far as it affected students from other Community countries. The legal position, however, was complex, went on the Commissioner. The British Government included within the definition of "foreign students" even some British nationals, so that discrimination might not be taking place. But Lord Reay was quick to add that the increased charges might also offend against the spirit of the Lomé Convention with developing countries.



## All out?

The speculation about the future seat of the European Parliament (see for example, *Unofficial Journal* in March) grows ever more intense. Chairman of the Parliament's Rules Committee, Willie Hamilton (Soc/UK), has tabled a resolution advocating that in 1977 Parliament should abandon Strasbourg altogether, with the exception of its "constituent sitting" (i.e. annual general meeting) in March, and hold the remainder in Luxembourg except, "as an earnest of its future intentions", for one sitting in Brussels. At Question Time on Wednesday, however, another Scots Socialist, Tam Dalyell, hinted at a different possibility. Who owned the Berlaymont building in Brussels (the Commission's headquarters), how much rent did the Commission pay, and what notice did it have to give? The annual rent to the Belgian Government, replied Commissioner Borschette, was 252,200,524 Belgian Francs (about £3,360,000); and the Commission could leave the Berlaymont at a year's notice "and start the migration".

## Mum on terrorists

With determined caginess, Mr. Thorn scotched a discussion on Community action against terrorists, while nevertheless hinting that great things were going on behind the scenes. He was replying to a question from Michael Yeats (EPD/Irl) who wanted to know when the meeting of Interior Ministers promised at the Rome summit would take place. Neither the date, nor the agenda had been fixed, said Mr. Thorn. But he could say that "there had been talks"; and even, off the record, that "there had been progress". But the affair, he added, did not lend itself, at this point, to public debate. "I will go as far as to say that it would be definitely preferable if the terrorists themselves knew the effects of our common action even before your Parliament."

## Short stories

People should be able to opt to retire early, was one of several suggestions made during an annual debate on the social situation on Tuesday, April 6. The spectre of unemployment figured throughout. Commissioner Hillery saw some hope in the attention that was now being focused on job creation but did not foresee dramatic improvements nor expect to see the Community unemployment total fall much lower by the end of the year than its present 4½ million. This compared with a peak of 5½ million in December 1975. The need for action was particularly acute for the young, said Marcel Vandewiele (CD/Bel); well over one million of those unemployed were aged under 25.

## 'Green Shield Stamps'

A Commission proposal related to skimmed milk, described as "ridiculous" and "a manifest absurdity" was thrown out by Parliament on Tuesday, April 6. After pouring scorn on Council and Commission policy, Parliament exacted a promise from Commissioner Lardinois that the proposal, which involved temporary aid for the stockpiling of proteins, would be withdrawn for reexamination. The Commissioner had explained that the proposal would prevent a reduction in mainly soya protein imports which might result from using surplus skimmed milk powder as animal feed.

Pressure from the United States was the real reason for the proposal, said Albert Liogier (EPD/F), and Cornelis Laban (Soc/NL) taunted: "the Community does not have to pay for American election campaigns". American fears could be allayed in other ways, argued James Scott-Hopkins (Con/UK), adding that Parliament had not even been consulted over the skimmed milk deposit scheme. Parliament should have real power to prevent such measures, said Nicola Cipolla (Comm/It).

"A sort of donation of Green Shield stamps" amounting to taxation without representation was how Gwyneth Dunwoody (Soc/UK) saw the scheme. Farmers in her constituency had told her that the cost to the consumer — let alone the producer — would be an extra £10 a ton, "a conscious and deliberate attempt to raise the price of food," she said.

## When in Rome ..

You're on holiday in Rome and see a beautiful modern Italian chair in a sale. Before handing over your lire, read on.

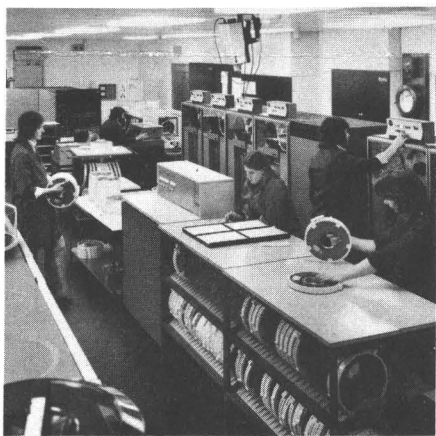
A holidaymaker from Luxembourg bought a furniture bargain in Italy. Living in a common market he thought he'd simply send it home by rail. But at the station he encountered: a dispatch note in sextuplicate requiring a hundred entries, an international rail transport form in triplicate requiring forty entries, a customs declaration requiring thirty-eight entries and a demand for three copies of a purchase receipt. Faced with this Kafkaesque procedure he sent it by road instead. That cost four times the rail freight charge.

Does this amount to free movement of goods? Libero Della Briotta asks in a written question. The rail form has been superfluous since 1971 and the receipt is only necessary for VAT exemption, replies the Commission; "at the present state of European integration it is not possible to dispense with an export declaration" although they're working on it.

# Unofficial Journal

Members of the European Parliament — and, indeed, anyone having anything at all to do with the European Community — are continually in danger of being overwhelmed by the great masses of paper emanating from Brussels and Luxembourg — or “Eurobumph” as it is rudely known. News that the British House of Lords — not for the first time in the van of progress — has been quietly putting all this documentation on computer comes, therefore, like a life-raft to drowning men.

It seems that the House of Lords Parliament Office has during the past year or so been conducting a limited experiment on the use of computers for indexing, using the Eurobumph as a test case. They started by cross-referencing all Commission draft proposals, European Parliament and Economic and Social Committee opinions, Parliament debates, and Council decisions from the beginning of 1975. Now all legislation affecting the UK since our entry has been added, together with other useful information like the names of the European Parliament *rapporteurs* and references to the processes of European Scrutiny at Westminster. Lacking a computer of their own, their Lordships have been



borrowing time and space on the Greater London Council's IBM across the river.

The next step has already been taken — detailed specifications have been drawn up, in collaboration with the Government Central Computer Agency, for a massive extension of the scheme. It would remain “a House of Lords system” but could be made available to others. It could be that this coming November 5 will see one of the largest bonfires in history round Kensington Palace Gardens.

## 1pt ÷ 1qt won't go

Proponents of Luxembourg as the major future meeting-place for the European Parliament (see Question Time on page 3) should perhaps take note of the chaos in and around the visitors' gallery at the April sitting. There were some 40 groups of up to 35 visitors each during the week — the public gallery holds just 35 people. Note for any spec. builder, interested in

running up a new European Parliament in time for direct elections in 1978: there are over 250 million inhabitants in the Community, all of whom will have the right to visit their Parliament.

## Bruce for the Budget

Another coup for the British House of Lords — which has been stripped of financial control as far as the British Parliament is concerned — has been the appointment of Lord Bruce of Donington as the European Parliament's “rapporteur” for the 1977 Community budget. As a demonstration that it means business this year, Parliament could not have made a better choice: Lord Bruce was one of the few Members — indeed perhaps the only Member — to have consistently voted against acceptance of this year's budget in protest against its shortcomings. This year could produce some dramatic events. Parliament is not going to accept any longer, Lord Bruce told “Unofficial Journal”, the Commission's draft coming out late in September instead of June; nor the present confusion as to how exactly the Common Agricultural Policy operates; nor the uncertainty as to what is and what is not “obligatory” expenditure. Is it possible that Lord Bruce will recommend this year that Parliament vote down the Budget (as it can under the Treaty)?

## Flight 007

Not so much “who will watch the watchers” as “who are the watchers?”. That was the problem in Luxembourg when the nine Heads of Government met on April 1-2. Apart from their Foreign Ministers, spokesmen and the usual aides, several leaders were closely accompanied by unsmiling burly types with darting eyes and bulges under their left armpits.

But confusion: how were the imported gorillas to know whether other unsmiling types with lists to port were Luxembourg's own security service or potential assassins? Please, said a visiting gorilla, could not their local oppos (or homologues, as the French put it) wear some sort of distinguishing badge?

Solution: by the afternoon the visiting gorillas could tell the locals by the little gold badges in their buttonholes, shaped like an aircraft, and bearing the word “Swissair”.

It is reported that one of them, asked about the times of planes to Geneva, was not amused.

## Centre spread

Those who were present at Monday, April 5's debate on the somewhat technical subject of coal liquefaction nevertheless witnessed what could be an important event in the development of European political parties when Sir Geoffrey de Freitas in the chair called “Mr. Vandewiele on behalf of the Christian Democratic Group and on behalf of the European Conservative Group”. The same thing happened the next day when Luigi Noè again spoke for both groups on EEC transit traffic through Austria and Switzerland.

This is the first time that Christian Democrats and Conservatives have operated as a single group in the European Parliament; but almost as

significant is the fact that the two CDs concerned were Belgian and Italian. Opposition to any formal links with the Conservatives is said to be strongest in precisely these two countries.

Indeed, neither Belgian leader of the Christian Democrat group, Alfred Bertrand, nor even Conservative leader Sir Peter Kirk, seem to have been told in advance. The operation was mounted, on a personal basis, by Conservative whip Tom Normanton in cooperation with the CD whip, German Member Egon Klepsch. Tom Normanton anticipates, however, that mutual cooperation will go on.

## United we stand...?

Meanwhile, Europe's Liberals have already made formal plans to fight direct elections when they come. On March 26 representatives from eight Community countries (Ireland has no Liberals) met in Stuttgart and set up the Federation of Liberal and Democratic Parties. “We are the first party in the European Community,” British Liberal leader Jeremy Thorpe announced at the end, “which has agreed to cooperate on a continental scale.”

Things are not, however, quite as clear cut as they seem. No fewer than 14 national parties are represented in the Liberal group in the European Parliament, and only three of them actually call themselves “Liberal”. The largest are Giscard D'Estaing's Independent Republicans (7 out of 26); and they are only “observers” of the Federation. Even the British Liberals are waiting until after their party conference before joining. Moreover the Young Giscardiens have already joined the Young European Democrats, a youth movement whose other constituent parts are the Young Conservatives and the Federation of Conservative Students. The plot thickens, Watson.

## Chance for the Pinta men

A delegation of the Parliament's Agriculture Committee, led by its chairman Roger Houdet (Lib/F), is visiting Thames Ditton at the end of April to hold discussions with the Milk Marketing Board (the HQ is there). They are coming at the invitation of Conservative Member for North Norfolk, Ralph Howell, who is the Committee's rapporteur on proposals to improve agricultural marketing.

It seems that this is one field in which Britain is well ahead. Marketing Boards do not exist in other Community countries — indeed, are viewed with deep suspicion as possible instruments of state control. It will be up to men at Thames Ditton to convince the delegation that the system is there to help rather than hinder the farmer, and provides a remedy to the problem of agricultural “mountains” and “lakes”.

## And the egg-man

Scottish Socialist Tam Dalyell appears to be a man of great foresight. Having breakfast at the Holiday Inn with Welsh colleague Tom Ellis, he was informed that no boiled eggs could be served. “In that case,” he replied, “I'll have some of my own”; and produced from a well-stocked briefcase not only one for himself, but one for Tom as well.

K. P. G.